

U N D E R S T A N D I N G

# The Link

*between* **Violence to Animals**  
*and* **People**



A Guidebook for Criminal Justice Professionals



**ASPCA**

*By Allie Phillips, J.D.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allie Phillips is a former prosecuting attorney, animal advocate, and published author who is nationally recognized for her work on behalf of animals and vulnerable victims. She is the Director of the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse and Deputy Director of the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse at the National District Attorneys Association in Alexandria, Virginia. She started her career as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Michigan gaining extensive trial experience handling numerous family violence cases. While a prosecutor, she volunteered at her county animal control shelter and identified a connection between violent defendants on her court docket and animals in the shelter seized for an abuse investigation.



In 2003, she joined the American Prosecutors Research Institute (which merged into NDAA) as a Senior Attorney trainer on child abuse issues and created a program on how animal abuse links to crimes against people. Subsequently she became the Vice President of Public Policy and Vice President of Human-Animal Strategic Initiatives for the American Humane Association where she continued her work to protect animals and children. In 2011, she returned to NDAA to focus exclusively on the interconnection between animals and children.

Allie has been training criminal justice professionals since 1997 and has dedicated her career to helping our most vulnerable victims. She specializes in the co-occurrence between violence to animals and people and animal protection, and is the founder of *Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T) Program*, the first and only global initiative working with domestic violence shelters to welcome families with pets. She is also the co-creator of *Therapy Animals Supporting Kids (TASK) Program* where she helps criminal justice professionals incorporate therapy animals to help maltreated children through the court system.

Allie has authored two award-winning books: *Defending the Defenseless: A Guide to Protecting and Advocating for Pets* (2011) and *How Shelter Pets are Brokered for Experimentation: Understanding Pound Seizure* (2010) and has written chapters in several animal protection books. She volunteers her time with numerous nonprofit organizations that benefit animals, including being an advisor to the Association of Professional Humane Educators, liaison to the ABA's Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence (where she contributes on Link issues), advisor to Denver Pet Partners, council member of the Michigan State Bar Animal Law Section, steering committee member of the National Link Coalition, vice president of No Paws Left Behind, co-founder of Michiganders for Shelter Pets, and volunteer for King Street Cats. She is a graduate of Michigan State University and University of Detroit School of Law. Learn more about her work and programs at [www.alliephillips.com](http://www.alliephillips.com) and [www.animalsandfamilies.org](http://www.animalsandfamilies.org).

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*Note: Throughout this publication, “animal abuse” is generally used as the overall broad term to describe all forms of crimes towards animals; “animal cruelty” is used to describe intentional criminal conduct towards animals; and “animal neglect” is used to describe negligent acts and/or failing to provide adequate care for animals.*

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## FOREWORD

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Mahatma Gandhi once said: “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” I say: “The safety and wellbeing of children and adults can be judged by the way their animals are treated — and how this information is shared among the professionals involved.”

I first became aware of the links among animal cruelty, child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse as a psychologist evaluating a case of child sexual abuse. A young boy was mute with panic until he was asked whether there had been any animals in the house. Once he began talking about what happened to the dog, he was able to disclose what happened to him. The presence of the dog was verified and used as evidence and the case was successfully prosecuted.

Twenty-five years later I can think of no other setting where one can put an animal in the middle of a group of highly diverse professionals and each professional can document a link between that animal's welfare and his or her own work as well as recognize the links to the other professions.

The progress in this field has been remarkable.

- Peer-reviewed studies document the toxic impact of exposure to violence, including violence to animals, as an Adverse Childhood Experience with long-term effects on the developing brain and subsequent poor health outcomes.
- Child abuse and elder abuse and neglect have been demonstrated to be correlates of animal cruelty.
- Domestic violence programs are beginning to query about pets and provide shelter for at-risk families and their pets.
- Child protective services workers, adult protective services worker and animal control officers link their observations when performing home visits because they know that where animals are at risk, people often are at risk and vice versa.
- Veterinarians are being trained in forensic pathology to determine cause of death and preservation of evidence for prosecution purposes.
- Law enforcement officers are educated about the often-extensive histories of crimes against society committed by persons who also abuse animals.
- Medical and mental health personnel are beginning to address the traumatic impact of dog bites as well as the connection between dog bites and physical abuse.
- Prosecutors are putting increased emphasis on animal abuse crimes because they understand that the behavior that harms the animal is the same behavior that harms humans.

Yes — we have come a long way. Yes — there still is much to do. Consciousness raising and education are forever tasks. With leadership organizations like the National District Attorneys Association, the National Link Coalition, and many others, the work continues knowing that the health and wellbeing of children and adults is safeguarded by also addressing the health and wellbeing of animals.

## Understanding the Link between Violence to Animals and People: A Guidebook for Criminal Justice Professionals

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All professionals who encounter abused people or abused animals must champion the Link and work collaboratively to be truly effective in mitigating the devastating personal and societal costs of violence. This Guidebook on the Link is designed to help achieve that goal.

Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

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# THE LINK IN THE NEWS

Published: Tuesday, November 27, 2012, 4:08 p.m.  
EMAIL ARTICLE | PRINT | JUMP TO COMMENTS

## 6-month sentence in stabbing death of parrot

By Rikki King, Herald Writer

EVERETT — An Everett man was sentenced to six months in jail Tuesday for the stabbing death of his former girlfriend's parrot. Richard J. Atkinson, 63, pleaded guilty last month in Snohomish County Superior Court to first-degree animal cruelty and second-degree domestic-violence malicious mischief. He's been held at the Snohomish County Jail since the Aug. 19 attack.

Police alleged that Atkinson was alone at the former couple's Everett home when he killed the bird with a serving fork and then trashed the house.

In court Tuesday, Atkinson's defense attorney William Steffener said his client doesn't remember what happened but believes he may have mixed anti-anxiety medication with whiskey and slipped into a blacked-out rage.

"He felt horrible," Steffener said.

The sentence was recommended by both prosecutors and the defense.

Deputy Prosecutor Paul Stern asked that Atkinson face a consequence that would be both punitive and preventative.

## Man Sentenced To 12 Years For Rape, Cruelty To Animals

August 07, 2013 | BY HILDA MUÑOZ, hmunoz@courant.com, The Hartford Courant

NEW BRITAIN — A New Britain man who raped a young girl in 2011 and sexually abused another girl in 2004 was sentenced Wednesday to 12 years in prison and 30 years of probation.

The Superior Court judge also ordered Francisco Castellano, who is in his late 40s, to register as a sex offender for life and issued a standing criminal protective order, barring him from contacting the victims.

Castellano had pleaded no contest in May to first-degree sexual assault, illegal sexual contact and cruelty to animals.

The warrant for Castellano says he raped a 14-year-old girl about 10 times between August and December 2011. The warrant also says that he would pin the girl down on his bed during the assaults, leaving "fingerprint bruises" on her arm. After the assault, the warrant also says, he taunted her about no longer being a virgin.

On to sexually assaulting the girl, Castellano would grab her hair, throw cans of food at her and kicked her pet dog

Castellano kicked the dog or would throw it across the living room by its legs, the warrants says.

Castellano, who threatened to kill her if she told anyone, and she kept the abuse to herself, the warrant says. The abuse affected her so much that she once had an asthma attack while arguing with him, the warrant says.

"I never even knew that I had asthma," she told investigators.

She confided in an older sister a few days before Christmas and the two planned on speaking with a social worker, but a third sister learned of the abuse and called the police, who contacted the victim, the warrant says.

As police investigated, they discovered three more victims, including the victim in the 2004 case. The victims described how Castellano grabbed their bodies as young girls and ripped their clothes, the warrant says.

examiner.com

## Man holding little boy hostage in Alabama is also accused of dog abuse



Getty Images



Penny Eims  
Dog News Examiner

January 31, 2013

**Update 2/4/13:** Authorities stormed the bunker this afternoon and rescued the little boy. His captor was killed.

The retired truck driver who is holding a five-year-old child hostage in rural Alabama is accused of violently beating a dog to death prior to the current shooting and kidnapping situation.

According to Thursday's **CBS News**, a neighbor of the suspect, Jimmy Lee Dykes, 65, told the Associated Press that Dykes

beat her 120-lb dog to death with a lead pipe.

The dog's owner, Ronda Wilbur, said that Dykes beat her dog with the pipe because the dog had wandered onto his property. The dog survived for one week before succumbing to his injuries.

Dykes apparently had no remorse for his actions. Wilbur told the AP that:

“He said his only regret was he didn't beat him to death all the way.”

“If a man can kill a dog, and beat it with a lead pipe and brag about it, it's nothing until it's going to be people.”

## Tucson man who killed puppy during fight with wife gets prison

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Respond: Write a letter to the editor | Write a guest opinion

December 12, 2012 2:37 pm • By Hipolito Corella

A Tucson man who killed a pit bull puppy during an argument with his wife was sentenced to 1 1/2 years in prison and three years intensive probation Wednesday.

Kevin Michael Davis, 46, was indicted in July on one count of cruel mistreatment of an animal and aggravated domestic violence.

Davis and his wife got into an argument over whether he should stop drinking and he twice took her puppy by its hind legs and slammed its head into concrete, killing it, according to court documents.

Davis pleaded guilty to cruelty to animals resulting in serious physical injury and aggravated domestic violence. Under the terms of his plea agreement, he could have been placed on probation on both charges or he could have received up to 2 years in prison on the cruelty charge and up to 2 1/2 years in prison on the domestic violence charge.

Assistant Pima County Public Defender Vladimir Novokshchenov asked Pima County Superior Court Judge Paul Tang to place his client on probation, noting he was just recently diagnosed as seriously mentally ill and would be able to receive treatment if released from custody.

Deputy Pima County Attorney Danielle Constant asked for a prison sentence because Davis has an extensive violent criminal history.

Davis' wife did not speak at the hearing, but Constant said she did not want him to go to prison.

Tang opted for the prison sentence, saying he had a hard time imagining what Davis did to the puppy, all in an effort to emotionally torture his wife. "It's beyond disturbing and deplorable," Tang said.

Davis has seven prior felony convictions and 21 misdemeanor convictions, Tang said. The crime was committed four months after Davis was released from prison.



# INTRODUCTION

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The Link between violence to people and violence to animals is well documented by research, both nationally and internationally. In its simplest form: violence to animals is a predictor that the abuser may become violent to people, and vice versa. Abuse is abuse no matter what the form or whom the victim.

Several decades of research documents the co-occurrence between crimes against people, such as child abuse co-occurring with domestic violence; but when we talk about the Link, these co-occurrence crimes are often inextricably tied to animal abuse. When someone harms an animal, the important question to ask is, “Who will be next?” Crimes against people are tied to a myriad of crimes against animals and three specific types of animal abuse that are linked to crimes against people are featured in this guidebook: sexual assaults against animals (bestiality), animal hoarding, and animal fighting.

This specialized area of knowledge has taken root in the medical, mental health and criminal justice communities over the past two decades; yet it is still misunderstood and unrecognized across many disciplines. This guidebook outlines what criminal justice, advocacy, medical, and mental health professionals need to know about the Link for purposes of investigating and prosecuting these cases, and helping to keep families and communities safe.



## WHAT IS THE LINK?

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The Link consists of the coexistence of two or more of these intra-familial crimes: child abuse (including physical and sexual abuse) or neglect, domestic violence (including stalking and rape), elder abuse or neglect (including financial exploitation), and animal abuse or neglect (including sexual assault, animal fighting and hoarding). The Link also includes the co-occurrence of animal abuse with other types of crime, such as homicide, weapons offenses, drug offenses, sexual assault, arson, assault or other violent crimes. Taking animal abuse as seriously as crimes against humans is important for the upholding of existing animal protection laws and protecting animal victims, but also for the following reasons:

- Animal abuse presents a risk of child abuse
- Animal violence may predict future violence
- Animal abuse is used to threaten human victims
- Animal abuse is used to prevent families from leaving the abusive home
- The co-occurrence of multiple forms of violence increases future violence. (Hackett & Uprichard, 2007)



### The Importance of Pets in Homes Today

Companion animals are a highly prevalent and important part of today's households. With approximately 68% of American households having a pet (82.5 million pets) (2013-14 American Pet Product's Association National Pet Owners' Survey), an increase from 62% in just one year, the potential for interconnection

between animal abuse and human violence is now more prevalent. For those who have/had a companion animal, they know the benefits of the significant bond that formed during the relationship.

- People look to their pets for support, comfort & security (McNicholas & Collis, 2006).
- Pets positively impact physical health and reduce stress (Friedmann, Son & Tsai, 2010).
- Pets provide greater life satisfaction (Raina, et al. 1999).
- Pets help us cope better with loss and grief (Bolin, 1988).
- A child is more likely to grow up with a pet than with an in-residence father (Melson, 2001).

Cherished pets are more likely to be used as tools of manipulation by an abuser. They may get caught in the crossfire of violence towards people, or the batterer may target the pet in order to gain silence and compliance from human victims. Families and communities are at risk when animal abuse is ignored or unreported alongside family violence. (Phillips & Lockwood, 2013)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LINK

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**When multiple forms of violence occur in a home, including animal abuse, the home is at increased risk of escalated and continued violence if all forms of violence are not addressed.**

- Animal abuse is more prevalent in homes that experience child abuse and domestic violence (Ascione & Shapiro, 2009; Ascione, 2007).
- Animal cruelty is included as one of the symptoms of “conduct disorder” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).
- Family pets may be targets of threats, harm, or killing to “emotionally blackmail” and coerce human victims to comply with and remain silent about abuse (Arkow, 2014).
- Family members who suffer domestic violence may be more likely to remain in an abusive home, or return home, if they do not have a safe place to put their pet.
- When children witness violence in the home, they are at increased risk of displaying violence toward animals (Currie, 2006).
- Children often have an emotional bond with their pets, and may suffer psychological harm if that pet is threatened, harmed, or killed.
- 43% of school shooters have animal abuse in their background (Arluke & Madfis, 2013).
- Animal hoarding is a mental health issue that must be treated in order to avoid continuing abuses. Hoarding impacts the social, emotional, and physical development of children in the home, and contributes to a public health issue (Patronek, 2006, 2008).
- Bestiality is connected to crimes against people (Hensley, Tallichet & Singer, 2006; Simons, Wurtele & Durham, 2008).
- Animal control and humane investigators are often the first responders to violent homes, especially in cases where animal abuse is reported by neighbors. This is an opportunity for animal protection and human protection professionals to work together to help families and prevent future violence.
- Like other forms of violence against people, animal abuse and neglect is a crime in every state, and the animal victims are entitled to the protection of those laws.
- When any form of violence is present in a home, others may be at risk.

It is important to understand the Link for the following reasons, which will be explored in detailed throughout this Guidebook:

- Abuse and neglect of animals, children, and adults is a crime.
- Harm to animals is a predictor crime of harm towards people.
- Harm to animals is an indicator crime of other violence going on in the home.
- Harm to animals destabilizes communities and contributes to overall lack of safety.<sup>1</sup>

It is important for all agencies and professionals to work together to address family and community violence. Working in silos and not sharing information about families in jeopardy, when permissible, only prevents an effective and collaborative response. Addressing the Link with agencies and community stakeholders may promote the prevention and reduction of violence.

Studies have established that, similar to people, animals feel pain and fear (Tannenbaum, 1999; de Waal, 2011). The excuse that “it’s only an animal” is no longer acceptable in our society. Animal abuse’s place on the continuum of violence gives criminal justice professionals the unique opportunity to effect holistic change in the family dynamic and play an integral role in protecting people and animals from violence.

*Those who understand this linkage of crimes towards animals and people are in a better position to prevent future violence and protect their communities.*

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LINK

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*When an intimate partner is being battered, the pet may be targeted to maintain silence and compliance from the human victim.*

The family pet that provides comfort and solace to adults and children after an abusive incident may also become an object of the same violence. The bond between people and their pets leaves some adult victims hesitant to leave an abusive home out of fear for leaving their beloved pet behind. While this dynamic is difficult for some people to understand, it is continually demonstrated to us in national news after a natural disaster occurs. It first began in 1992 with Hurricane Andrew in the Gulf Coast region of the United States, and then more significantly during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The recent wildfires in the west, Super Storm Sandy on the northeast coast in 2012, the overwhelming flooding that occurred in Colorado in 2013, and the deadly mudslides in Washington state in 2014 all witnessed pet owners experience this dilemma. The federal government acknowledges the bond between pet and owner on a website that helps people prepare a disaster plan for pets, with clear instructions to never leave a pet behind (<http://www.ready.gov/caring-animals>). Emotional bonds with pets are intensified during a crisis, whether it is during a natural disaster or episode of domestic violence. Not unlike victims of natural disasters, people facing domestic violence may be unwilling to leave a pet behind, especially when they believe the pet will be harmed, abused or killed.

### Facts and Figures

- 1.3 million women and 835,000 men in the U.S. are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007).
- Twelve independent studies report that between 18% and 48% of battered women have delayed their decision to leave their batterer, or have returned to their batterer, out of fear for the welfare of their pets or livestock (Ascione, 2007).
- A 2012 study found that 59% of abused women delayed leaving the home out of fear of leaving their pets behind (Alberta SPCA, 2012).
- In a study of domestic violence shelters across the country, 85% of shelter directors encountered cases in which women disclosed animal abuse (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997).
- A 2007 study found that women seeking refuge at a family violence shelter were nearly 11 times more likely to report that their partner had hurt/killed their pet and that shelter women were 4 times more likely to report that their pet had been threatened (Ascione et al., 2007; Volant, Johnson, Gullone & Coleman, 2008).
- In a study of battered women in several northeastern states, 48% of respondents reported that animal abuse had occurred “often” during the past 12 months, and another 30% reported that the abuse occurred “almost always.” Types of animal abuse reported included punching, hitting, choking, drown-

ing, shooting, stabbing, and throwing the animal against a wall or down stairs. Respondents reported that animal cruelty incidents coincided with violent outbursts against human family members 51% of the time (Carlisle-Frank, Frank & Nielsen, 2006).

- “Batterers who also abuse their pets are both more controlling and use more dangerous forms of violence [sexual violence, marital rape, emotional violence and stalking] than batterers who do not” (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).
- In a study of the barriers preventing rural women from leaving domestic violence abusers, Canadian researchers identified animal abuse, social and geographic isolation, poverty, a lack of social services, inadequate transportation, and firearms as factors that silence women from leaving or reporting. “Pets and/or farm animals are often threatened, harmed or neglected as a means of controlling an abused woman, and it is common for women to delay seeking help out of fear for their animals.” Forty-five percent of the women said that their pets and/or farm animals were deliberately threatened with harm, and in 41% of cases the pets actually were deliberately harmed or killed (Doherty & Hornosty, 2008).
- One of the strongest studies covered a seven-year period in 11 different site locations to look at factors that initiate battering behavior. While the study did not set out to focus on animal abuse, the results showed that animal abuse was a significant variable and was one of only four factors associated with becoming a batterer (Walton-Moss, et al., 2005).

*“As a domestic violence advocate working in many programs at different capacities since 1987, I strongly encourage advocates to take animal abuse seriously when assisting clients in assessing lethality in their relationships. There is a correlation between animal abuse and lethality in domestic violence cases, and abusers who hurt animals are more likely to seriously hurt or kill their victims. Questions addressing animal abuse should be part of a lethality checklist. Abusers also intimidate victims with threats to hurt or kill their pets if the victim leaves, and many victims will not leave their pets behind when escaping an abusive relationship (for fear of the abuser retaliating with their pets). This is another important reason to explore this information with your client. Add questions like, ‘Has your partner ever threatened to hurt or kill a pet? Has your partner ever hurt or killed a pet?’ Becoming aware of this information will enhance the safety of victims, their children and pets.” — Maria Luisa O’Neill (Program Services Coordinator, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)*

Studies have documented the generational cycles of abuse within families. The results from the National Youth Survey Family Study, which is a national, longitudinal study of 1,614 individuals, representing two generations from 1990 to 2004, was analyzed. The findings included:

- 3% of the parents’ generation reported having perpetrated animal abuse in their youth, with an average age of onset of 12 years of age.
- 33% of the parents reported histories of violent interpersonal violence perpetration.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LINK

- 34% of the parents reported histories of violent interpersonal violence victimization.
- 3% of their children, surveyed 14 years later, reported histories of perpetrating animal abuse, with an average age of onset of 11 years. (Knight, Ellis & Simmons, 2014).

The parents' history of animal abuse was predictive of later interpersonal violence perpetration and victimization:

- Parents with early histories of animal abuse were 3.6 times more likely to be violent interpersonal violence perpetrators than were parents without animal abuse histories. This finding lends support to the "graduation hypothesis," they noted, in which animal abuse serves as an introduction to increasingly escalating forms of interpersonal violence.
- There was a stronger intergenerational pattern of victimization: parents with early histories of animal abuse were 19.5 times more likely to be victims of violent interpersonal violence than were those without animal abuse histories. This finding lends support to the need to consider social environments and family contexts as contributing risk factors, they said.
- Lastly, the parents' earlier history of interpersonal violence was predictive of their children's history of animal abuse, specifically the children being almost 3 times more likely to have a history of animal abuse compared to parents who did not report interpersonal violence perpetration.

A 2012 study from New Zealand explored the reasons why companion animals are harmed in intra-familial violence (Roguski, 2012). The study focused on animals abused during and after an abusive relationship and found these factors:

<b>Cruelty to animals during the abusive relationship</b>
Abusing animals creates a culture of normalized violence while harming people
Abusers gain a perverse satisfaction from hurting pets, often pets not in the home, which was not anger related but often done to instill fear in the family
Abusing the animals as punishment for unwanted behavior from people
Abusing animals out of jealousy of the relationship between the animal and human victims
Abusing animals as a threat to keep the humans in the home and to show intolerance for misbehaving by people
Animals caught in the cross fire of violence towards people
Abusing animals to avoid police intervention (which was more likely to occur with human violence) because they felt police did not care about animal abuse crimes
Animals used as sexual objects as a form of power and control over the human victims <sup>2</sup>

### Cruelty to animals after the abusive relationship ended

Threats to harm the animal(s) left behind

Actual harm to animals left behind as punishment for the person leaving

Harm to the animals of friends and family out of retaliation for the person leaving

The research validates what many people already know: having pets gives many people a reason to live. For women who are abused and may be socially isolated by their abuser, a pet could save their lives. A 2007 study looked at how pets can be a protective factor for abused women and found that it was the fear for the pet's safety along with the pet providing social support that allowed women to cope with the abuse, not end their lives, and ultimately get to safety (Fitzgerald, 2007). "Pets are uniquely situated to provide social support to some abused women and can even serve a protective function against suicidality. In order to adequately address the needs of abused women, particularly related to suicidality, the important role of pets can play in their lives must be taken seriously and, ideally, fostered" (Fitzgerald, 2007).

It is important for agencies to acknowledge that pets are part of the family and that families experiencing domestic violence will need safety plans for their pets. Changing agency protocols to acknowledge that pets will be addressed in [Changing Agency Procedures](#). The section on [Families Seeking Shelter with Pets](#) outlines resources to help families to escape to safety with their pets. When family violence shelters open their doors to assisting family pets, they will remove one barrier to safety. Fortunately, close to one hundred family violence shelters are now doing this.

### Pets of Domestic Violence

Just like people, pets can also be victims of domestic violence. Many pet owners, especially those who are battered, may not wish to be separated from their pet if they leave the abusive home. Therefore, they are likely to stay in the abusive environment and expose themselves, their children and their pets to continued violence. Training first responders to ask domestic violence victims about family pets should be incorporated into protocols. Knowing if a pet is in an abusive home, and working with the victim to remove the pet, may avoid a situation where the survivor delays leaving or returns to the home to protect the pet. "A greater understanding of the dynamics of pet abuse and women's decisions about their pets when seeking shelter would inform professionals' efforts to facilitate women's departures from violence relationships and their recovery process" (Hardesty, et al., 2013).

Including pets in domestic violence protective orders has been on the legislative forefront since 2006. These laws enhance safety for victims by increasing the types of relief victims can request and judges can direct via a family violence protective order. The need for these laws is that the issue of victims' safety concerns about their pets has been identified within the victim services field as an under-served need that directly affects victim safety and wellbeing. These laws encourage judges to include family pets (dogs, cats, rabbits and sometimes livestock) in domestic violence protection orders. Seven states (Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, and Tennessee), have specifically added "cruelty to animals" to the definition of domestic violence when committed to intimidate or coerce a partner. While a judge should be

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LINK

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able to include a family pet in a protection order under the property category or “other relief” (check your state law to make sure that the property definition is not narrowly written to exclude animals), this movement in adding pets to protective order laws is another recognition that pets are part of the family and can be victims of intra-familial violence.

For a listing of states that have passed protective order laws to include pets, please visit the [National Link Coalition website](#) to view the listing of states with Pet Protective Order laws.

*Regardless of whether your state has included pets in your domestic violence protective order law, remember that pets may be included in the property or “other relief” category of a protection order.*



## CHILD ABUSE AND THE LINK

*“Teaching a child empathy and compassion and returning him to a toxic environment is like cleaning an oiled bird and returning it to the muck.” — Dr. Randall Lockwood (ASPCA)*

### Facts and Figures

- In 2012, approximately 678,000 children were substantiated as abused or neglected stemming from 3.4 million reports/referrals, and an estimated 1,640 children died from abuse or neglect (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2013).
- Neglect is the most common form of child abuse (78% of cases), followed by physical abuse (18% of cases) then sexual abuse (9% of cases) (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2013).
- Over 80% of child abuse/neglect perpetrators are parents (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2013).
- One of the first studies to address the Link between child abuse and animal abuse discovered that 88% of homes with physically abused children also included abuse or neglect of the family pet (DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983).
- One study found that 62% to 76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children (Faver & Strand, 2003). And where studies have shown that children have been found to intervene to protect their mothers from being battered (Edelson, Mbilinyi, Beeman & Hagemeister, 2003), anecdotal evidence shows that some children may even allow themselves to be victimized to save their pets from being harmed or killed.
- A 2009 study focusing on the interconnection of animal cruelty, child abuse, and domestic violence found that nearly half of the participants suffered at least one form of violence during childhood and that victims of family violence were more likely to experience animal cruelty. Witnessing animal cruelty was the largest predictor of future violence by the witness, who was more than eight times more likely to subsequently become a perpetrator of violence. The study determined that when the witnessing of animal cruelty interacts with child maltreatment or exposure to domestic violence, the risk of animal cruelty increases; when domestic violence was limited to the most severe cases, exposed individuals were more likely to have witnessed animal abuse; and animal abuse perpetration was also associated with higher rates of child neglect (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009).
- In one study of battered women with children who sought shelter in a safe house, 32% reported that their children had hurt or killed a family pet (Ascione, 1998).

- Children who are exposed to domestic violence are nearly three times more likely to be cruel to animals than children who are not exposed to such violence (Currie, 2006).
- A 2007 study found that 67% of children residing in family violence shelters reported witnessing abuse of their family pet, almost 60% of children were very upset about the harm to their pet(s), and 37% of the shelter children progressed to harming or killing pets (Ascione et al., 2007).
- A 2011 study found a connection between a child witnessing animal abuse and subsequently engaging in animal abuse and bullying behavior (Gullone, 2011).
- Frequent spanking of 3-year-olds was associated with higher levels of child aggression when the child was 5, including temper tantrums and lashing out physically against other people and animals (Taylor, et al., 2010).
- Children who are physically punished more frequently before adolescence are more likely to abuse animals (Flynn, 1999).
- Animal cruelty committed by children is often symptomatic of future abuse of other animals or people (Boat, 1999) and one study revealed that 37% of boys and 29% of girls who were victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence were reported to abuse their family pet (Ascione, 2005).
- Significant research has documented a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Hensley & Talli-chet, 2005; Merz-Perez, Heide & Silverman, 2001; Becker & French, 2004).

Children are surrounded by animals from their very first moments of life. Animals appear on their clothing and room decorations, in stories, TV shows, movies, and as toys. As part of healthy growth and development, a child's bond with animals teaches empathy and compassion.

When a child has been abused or traumatized, the nonjudgmental comfort from an animal can help the child heal (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009). The same bond can be exploited to seek silence and compliance from children who have been battered or who have witnessed violence in the home.

According to Dr. Barbara Boat of the University of Cincinnati Children's Hospital and The Childhood Trust, witnessing the abuse of animals in the home is being recognized as toxic stress and an adverse childhood experience (ACE). Dr. Boat has studied the "toxic triad" of animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence for over two decades. She has concluded that when a child experiences these abusive events in early childhood, it can harm developing brain architecture resulting in long-term hyper-responsiveness to perceived threats, and lead to lifelong negative physical and mental health issues.

In a 14-year-long study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the health and social effects of ACEs were examined over the lifespan of 17,337 adults. Unfortunately, the study missed an important component: it failed to include exposure to animal abuse in the home. Dr. Boat believes that until we include animal abuse in ACEs, we will be missing key opportunities for early intervention. For any child who progresses to harming animals, Dr. Boat says that knowledge of animal cruelty histories might help

us discriminate between children with severe or destructive conduct disorders and those with milder, non-destructive conduct disorders, and might flag children who are at risk for abusive experiences. The more we know about these kids, the more it can inform treatment.

In recognition of this harm, laws are beginning to address when children are exposed to animal abuse. Federal: In 2014, the federal Animal Fighting Venture Prohibition Act (7 U.S.C.A. § 2156 and 18 U.S.C.A § 49) added a provision enhancing the criminal penalties for anyone bringing a child under the age of 16 to an animal fighting event.

- Florida: FLA. STAT. ANN. § 800.04 (2008) increases the penalty for a person who commits bestiality in front of a minor child.
- Idaho: IDAHO CODE ANN. § 18-1506A (2006) provides that animal torture (including part of a ceremony or rite) committed in front of a child is a felony and deemed ritualized child abuse.
- Illinois: 720 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/12-33 (2011) addresses that ritualized child abuse occurs when a person tortures an animal in front of a minor child.
- Oregon: OR. REV. STAT. ANN. § 167.320 (2003) makes it a first-degree felony to commit animal abuse in front of a minor child.
- Puerto Rico: P.R. LAWS ANN. tit. 5, §§ 1668, 1669 and 1670 (2013) enhance the felony penalty if a person is convicted of animal abuse and has previously been convicted of abusing an animal in front of a minor child.

*“A primary mission of professional social workers is the enhancement of individual and family functioning. Animal abuse is correlated with family dysfunction in several forms including intimate partner, child and elder abuse. Thus it may be an indicator of the need to probe for other forms of violence in homes. Social workers provide the majority of mental health services in the U.S. and much of their work is home-based. They are in an important position to help in early identification of such dysfunction. Early identification can provide an opportunity for intervention, help limit damage already done, identify at-risk populations and prevent future abuse. Understanding the meaning of the link between animal and human violence means social work professionals can help both people and animals.” — Dr. Christina Risley-Curtiss, MSSW (Associate Professor, Arizona State University School of Social Work Fellow, Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics Founder/Director of Children and Animals Together Assessment and Intervention Co-Director, Child Welfare Training Project Affiliate, Women and Gender Studies Program)*

It is important to talk to children about their experiences with animals, either to confirm a healthy and nurturing bond between the child and the pet, or to identify when has a child has harmed an animal or witnessed animal abuse. When talking to children about their experiences with abuse or witnessing abuse, it is important to allow the child to feel comfortable in disclosing so that accurate information can be gathered to assist with case planning.

*Add questions about family pets to your forensic interview protocols.*

The forensic interview process is a safe setting to inquire about animals. Simply asking a few questions during the rapport-building process may allow the child to feel comfortable (by focusing on a topic other than him/herself) and to share what is happening in the home regarding animals. These four questions will get the process started:

- Do you have a pet?
- Tell me about your pet(s)?
- Is your pet happy?
- Is your pet safe?

It is also important to ask children whether anyone has asked or forced them to harm an animal. This relates back to studies that have identified that some offenders will force children to engage in acts of bestiality (animal sexual assault) or to participate in animal fighting events by training the dogs or collecting bets. Children of all ages can provide a wealth of information regarding the dynamics of the home, including how family pets or other animals are treated by the offender — but they must be asked in order to obtain the information. This data will benefit social workers, child protection investigators, law enforcement, prosecutors, probation agents, and judges.

*Children who grow up exposed to chronic violence may develop beliefs that harming an animal, bullying, misbehaving and other criminal activity is the norm. It is not.*

## YOUTH CRIMES AND THE LINK

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*“The prosecution of cases involving juvenile animal abuse offenders can be challenging and emotionally daunting for prosecutors. Many youth who commit acts of animal cruelty were exposed to violence early in their childhood. This early exposure to a high stress abusive environment can cause children to fail to develop empathy and to have a desire to harm other living beings. Studies have shown that 30% of children exposed to domestic violence and abuse have subsequently committed acts of animal cruelty against their pets. In addition, without intervention, these children may be unable to achieve a bright future. Studies show that youth who engaged in acts of animal cruelty between the ages of six and twelve are twice as likely to be charged in a violent juvenile delinquency offense against a human. Often court personnel are unfamiliar with how to best provide rehabilitative services for convicted youth. It is important that the prosecutor be prepared to guide the court to appropriate treatment programs that will successfully rehabilitate juvenile offenders.”*  
— Jennifer Rallo (Assistant State’s Attorney, Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office)

When a youth is accused of a Link-related crime, it becomes important to effectively address the underlying causes that resulted in the criminal conduct. The investigation should uncover whether the youth may have been abused or neglected and/or may have mental health issues that require immediate intervention to prevent future and escalating violence.

It is also important to identify whether the youth witnessed animal abuse in early childhood, which can be particularly devastating for a child during formative years. “When examining possible pathways of acquisition between animal abuse and bullying behaviors, it was found that each type of behavior was significantly predicted by the witnessing of animal abuse” (Gullone, 2011).

Children and youth are abusive to animals for a variety of reasons:

- Curiosity or exploration
- Peer pressure
- To threaten or intimidate others to gain power and control
- Sexual gratification
- To prevent someone else from harming their pet
- Acting out the abuse they have suffered
- Rehearsing their own suicide
- Seeking to shock or offend others to draw attention to themselves or
- As a way of producing injury to themselves, analogous to “cutting”

### When Youth are Bystanders to Animal Abuse

One study interviewed twenty-five college students who were adolescent bystanders to animal abuse to determine when (or whether) a child will intervene when another child is harming an animal (Arluke, 2012). The average age at the time of the incident was 14; half were female, all but one was Caucasian. Two-thirds of the animals harmed were rodents; 20% were cats and dogs. Most of those surveyed were emotionally/morally distressed about what they witnessed, yet only 20% intervened and none reported the abuse to an adult.

The study discussed two features of adolescent peer culture that would seem to be likely contributors to bystander apathy in animal cruelty cases.

- (1) Adolescents have been found to define certain untoward behaviors, such as the use of sexual innuendos, racist epithets, or animal abuse, as acceptable play. These forms of “dirty play” are experienced as fun and thrilling in part because adolescents know that adult society does not condone them (Fine, 1992), but also because they can try on adult roles from which they have been excluded (Arluke, 2002). Dirty play is similar to swearing, racist jokes, playing with fire, and looking at pornography. Those surveyed felt that this conduct at that age was normal, so they did not do anything about it. Only when the “play” became life threatening did the students feel that it was wrong.
- (2) Bystanders may think it is cool to be apathetic and uncool to be a tattletale who pries into other’s business, rendering the norm of social responsibility inoperative.

*“Adolescent bystanders of animal abuse were hesitant to intervene in these cases because of constraints stemming from their close personal ties; namely, these affiliations (a) defined animal abuse as a form of “dirty play” rather than as bad or criminal behavior, (b) treated everyone present during the abuse as part of the play, and (c) threatened to negatively sanction ‘tattletales’ and ‘spoilsports’” (Arluke, 2012).*

The adolescent bystanders felt drawn in even though they were not participating. Most felt that the abuser was only being abusive because there was an audience and would not have harmed the animal if alone. The incidents generally occurred when an adult was not at home or outside of the home in a private location to avoid detection by an adult. A few incidents involved parents as the abusers. Gender was a big factor if the abuser was a boy and the bystander was a female (she did not feel she could object to the abuse).

Being labeled a tattletale as an adolescent was a strong factor that caused the children surveyed to not report to an adult. Females did not want to be labeled as weak or emotional. When each was questioned about the abusive incident, now as an adult, most felt remorse for not disclosing, but in their adolescent brain they were not able to report.

*Educate kids that it's cool to report animal abuse to an adult and be the hero for a helpless animal.*

Studying youthful bystanders of animal cruelty provides an ideal opportunity to explore the kinds of barriers facing children and adolescents who witness violence rendered by friends and family members.

### The Psychological Impact on Youth Animal Abusers

*“It is now understood that childhood cruelty to animals is an important predictor of later antisocial and aggressive acts and that children showing these behaviors, without intervention, are at risk for enduring disorders in conduct and mental health” (Becker & French, 2004).*

Animal abuse (specifically aggression towards animals) was added in 1987 to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)* as a symptom of Conduct Disorder. Conduct Disorder involves repetitive and persistent patterns of behavior that violate the basic rights of others and societal norms or rules. There are two subtypes of Conduct Disorder: Childhood-Onset and Adolescent-Onset.

Subtypes of Conduct Disorder are now being examined and one subtype that may be of special interest to those studying animal abuse relates to youths who are described as displaying callous and unemotional traits. These traits may be implicated in psychopathy (Vaughn & Howard, 2005) and are potentially related to deficits in empathy (Kotler & McMahon, 2005; Raine et al., 2006). In one study of a normative sample of school-aged children, it was found that scores on a measure of callous-unemotional traits were positively correlated with scores on an animal abuse measure (Dadds, Whiting & Hawes, 2006). A recent case report suggests that both actual and symbolic (e.g., dismembering a toy animal, hanging a sibling's toy teddy bear by a noose) animal abuse may have diagnostic value (Shapiro, Prince, Ireland & Stein, 2006). (Ascione & Shapiro, 2009).

When youth are harmful to animals, this is an indicator that other harmful acts may be occurring. “Setting fires, bullying, and forced sex are three additional symptoms of antisocial behavior related to the diagnostic criteria for Conduct Disorder. Recent research suggests that animal abuse may co-occur with these other forms of destructiveness and aggression” (Ascione & Shapiro, 2009).

Fire setting and animal abuse among youth have been correlated (Kolko, 2002), and correlations between arson and animal abuse have been reported in children and adolescents exposed to domestic violence (Dadds & Fraser, 2006; Becker, Stuewig, Herrera & McCloskey, 2004). One study of 9- to 12-year-old Italian children found that being a victim of bullying was the strongest predictor of committing animal abuse

(Baldry, 2005). Similar results were found in an Australian sample of 12- to 16-year-old youth who were both victims and perpetrators of bullying (Gullone & Robertson, 2008).

A recent increase in youth school shooters prompted a 2013 study (Arluke & Madfis, 2013), which looked into the backgrounds of youth shooters to assess whether animal abuse was present and, if so, determine the nature of the abuse. Past studies found an insufficient correlation between animal abuse and school shooters. A study by Verlinden, et al. in 2000 studied ten school shooters between 1996 and 1999 and found that half had previously engaged in animal abuse. However, Verlinden identified other stronger factors that were more significant: stressful event/loss of status, exhibiting signs of depression, having a preoccupation with violent media/music, feeling rejected by peers, and being picked on and persecuted. All of the sample's school shooters demonstrated having a fascination with weapons and explosives, blaming others for problems, and threatening violence in advance of the attack.

The Arluke and Madfis study of 23 school shooters reported that ten (or 43%) had a background of animal cruelty, 90% of those incidents were “up close and personal” attacks on animals, and 70% of the animals were unknown to the abuser (not a family pet) (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). The researchers found that some school shooters had empathy for animals and related to them as “underdogs”, including Adam Lanza (the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooter) who was a self-described “ethical vegan” and professed to care about animals. They suggested that “everyday” incidents of animal abuse do not necessarily predict antisocial behavior like school shootings, and that this sort of sadistic violence may stem from childhood trauma and shame. The most common denominator was the harm to animals in an “up close” and personal manner. The authors concluded that if youth cannot find a socially acceptable method for handling their sense of powerless, then the “early experiences with animal cruelty may become a training ground for later committing assaults, rape, and even murder” (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). While the debate continues regarding links among school shooters, sadistic serial killers, and animal abuse, it is important for investigators and prosecutors to become increasingly aware of the type(s) of animal abuse in the background of the offender and recognize these incidents as a red flag for potential future individual and mass violence.

A number of programs for engaging at-risk and offending youths in a safe setting with animals are detailed later in this Guidebook (See, [Treatment Options for Link Crimes](#)). It is important to identify early childhood and youthful harm towards animals and others and provide the appropriate intervention to stop the cycle of violence.

*“The belief that one’s treatment of animals is closely associated with the treatment of fellow humans has a long history, but despite the popular acceptance of this concept, until recently there were few attempts to systematically study the relationship between the treatment of animals and humans. The approach of mental health professionals to animal cruelty has shifted in alignment with society’s changing view of such abuse. Prior to 1987 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders did not even consider such acts as indicative of mental illness. Later editions saw such behavior as a form of “destruction of property” diagnostic of Conduct Disorder and it now is part of the category of “violence against others.” Many advocates for animals and others hope that a better understanding of how cruelty to animals is related to other forms of violence may help in developing tools for prevention and intervention.” — Randall Lockwood, Ph.D. (Senior Vice President, Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)*



## ELDER ABUSE AND THE LINK

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A conservative estimate is that 1 in 3 elderly people have a pet (Mason, Peak, Krannich & Sanderson, 2002). Many elderly people live alone; their spouses may have passed on or their children have moved away, and some may be housebound due to physical restrictions, thus contributing to their isolation. A beloved pet can become an elderly person's only family, friend, and source of comfort and companionship. This bond can be manipulated by someone abusing or exploiting the elderly person.

Pets can be threatened with harm or actually hurt or killed as a means to coerce an elderly person to submit to the wishes of another. Abuse of the elderly is emerging as a significant factor in the increasing incidence of violence in the family. Many elderly people have less mobility, rely on pets for companionship, and often suffer depression if a pet dies or if they have to enter a care facility without their pet. They often struggle to give appropriate veterinary care due to financial restraints or inability to travel. Sadly, neglect of animals is often found. As discussed later, animal hoarding — a serious mental health issue with significant implications for individual and community health, welfare and safety — is most frequently committed by older persons. Yet the Link between violence to elders and animals continues to be under-studied.

Like child abuse and domestic violence, elderly people need to be asked about their pets. A 2012 study surveyed 41 state Adult Protective Service (APS) agencies and found that 51% of those agencies do not ask any pet-related questions to their elderly clients, and only one agency asked about pet-related concerns. Some APS workers are known to make notes regarding pet issues detected in the home, although not required. APS workers may find that there are more issues involving animals with adult clients, such as animal hoarding, inability to manage pets, or spending money on pets and not on oneself (Peak, Ascione & Doney, 2012). This is another area where simply asking questions about pets can help with providing appropriate services and ensuring that all are safe in the home.

A 2009 survey of APS agencies in all 50 states (of which agencies in 41 states responded) addressed whether clients are asked questions about animals. The questions and results were:

- In your screening process for elder abuse, do you ask if pets are present in the home?  
(Yes: 46%; No: 54%)
- Do you ask any questions concerning pet abuse or animal welfare in general?  
(Yes: 12%; No: 88%)

This study demonstrates the lack of questions being asked to vulnerable seniors who may have their pets threatened or harmed (Ascione & Peak, 2011).

Another study also focused on whether APS workers are asking clients about their pets and are developing a plan for the care of pets (Boat & Knight, 2000). Six case managers were interviewed from a Midwestern state that assists approximately 1,500 elderly and disabled clients per year (ranging from age 30 to 85). The

study found that threats or harm to pets were infrequent, but dramatic when it occurred. Recommendations from the study included asking elderly adults about their pets (this can assist with caseworker safety issues as well as pet care), asking if they are worried about their pet, and asking if their pet is in danger.

*Please review your local adult protective services protocols and encourage caseworkers to inquire about family pets, to be on the lookout for neglected pets, and to coordinate with meal providers and animal shelters to also offer pet food to elder clients with pets.*

Financial exploitation of elders is another form of elder abuse and often perpetrated by caregivers (including adult children and grandchildren). The abuse may include aggression or violence toward the elder person and their pet, but can also include theft of property, money and financial information. If a pet is present in the elder person's home, the pet can become a target to exert coercion over the elder. But due to generational beliefs or isolation, the elderly person may not report the abuse.

If an offender claims that the elder suffers from dementia and is discussing a former pet that has since passed on, social service caseworkers should not accept that claim as true. Instead, look throughout the elder person's home for recent signs of a pet, such as food bowls, litter box, pet food, toys, leashes and bedding with pet fur on it to refute that claim.

*By looking beyond the claims of the alleged offender, evidence that a pet has been harmed or killed may be uncovered.*

## SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST ANIMALS (BESTIALITY) AND THE LINK

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Sexual assault against an animal (more commonly known as bestiality) is often characterized in statutes as a crime against nature. Currently, 38 states plus the District of Columbia have laws prohibiting bestiality.<sup>3</sup> The crime of bestiality is receiving greater attention by law enforcement and the public, in part due to increased media interest and increased awareness of its connection with other criminal behavior of the offenders.

Bestiality has been documented in relation to crimes against people when retrospective reports of incarcerated men have been examined (Hensley, Tallichet & Singer, 2006; Simons, Wurtele & Durham, 2008). This includes the linkage to crimes against children (including child sexual assault), domestic violence, and the making of child and/or animal pornography. Studies have also informed us that some offenders force their child and adult victims to engage in bestiality (Ascione, 1993).

*Several years ago I was contacted regarding an incident where a woman and her three sons were being abused by the husband. During one particularly violence incident, the abuser took one of the family dogs into the backyard and sexually assaulted the dog in front of his wife and children and then shot and killed the dog. It was at that point that the wife realized that she and her three sons would likely be sexually assaulted and/or killed if they did not leave immediately. She was able to get herself, her three sons and the remaining dog to a shelter that was able to welcome pets on-site. The husband was subsequently arrested and prosecuted for animal abuse. — Allie Phillips (Director, National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse and Deputy Director, National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse, National District Attorneys Association)*

Legislators have started to recognize that those who sexually assault animals should be monitored similar to those who sexually assault children and adults. Nearly half of the states have passed laws that require a defendant to register as a sex offender if s/he is convicted of bestiality or for forcing another to engage in bestiality. And 44 states plus the federal government, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands have laws that include bestiality in the definition of child pornography/obscenity and requiring sex offender registration for the production, promotion, distribution, or possession of bestiality-related materials or live shows.<sup>4</sup>



## ANIMAL HOARDING AND THE LINK

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In the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders — 5* (DSM-5) (released in 2013), hoarding disorder was added as a new disorder with distinct treatments. Hoarding involves the excessive collection of possessions, the difficulty in parting with those possessions, and where the items have little if any value or utility other than contributing to excessive clutter.

Symptoms of the disorder cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning including maintaining an environment for self and/or others. While some people who hoard may not be particularly distressed by their behavior, their behavior can be distressing to other people, such as family members or landlords.<sup>5</sup>

While animal hoarding was not specifically mentioned in the DSM-5, the similarities of animal hoarding may be a specialized form of hoarding disorder, according to hoarding expert Dr. Gary Patronek. Recent research into hoarding focuses on histories of early childhood trauma and stressful life events as affecting neurobiology and leading to a disordered attachment style that may predispose some individuals to hoarding objects. These findings are aligned with experiences with animal hoarders. “Thus, it is possible that in adulthood, some people who have difficulty establishing supportive interpersonal relationships or who otherwise have difficulty coping with life stressors would find refuge in animals,” says Patronek. “Animals provide these individuals with reward, acceptance, conflict-free relationships, and a sense of self-worth.”<sup>6</sup>

The stereotype of an animal hoarder is that of a single, older woman, living alone and socioeconomically disadvantaged.<sup>7</sup> Statistics compiled from 2000-2010 by Pet-abuse.com confirm this stereotype, with hoarding cases skewing dramatically toward a female population over age 51.<sup>8</sup> However, animal hoarding crosses all age cohorts and socioeconomic groups.

Animal hoarding has been found to coincide with child neglect (dirty home, unclean clothing, inability to bathe/shower, asthma from inhaling animal urine ammonia, medical issues from insect bites and unclean living, and living among declining, dying and dead animals), elder neglect (taking in unwanted animals as extended family members when human family members may live at a distance and a spouse has passed on, inability to properly feed or provide veterinary care), and a host of animal abuse and neglect concerns. When such situations involve violations of state and local animal abuse laws as well as mental health issues, animal welfare investigators and prosecutors, as well as social services and mental health professionals, face challenging decisions regarding the most appropriate and effective strategies to ameliorate the situation.

Children who live with hoarders are at risk for a myriad of health, emotional and social issues.

**Social concerns:**

- Isolation from family
- Isolation from friends
- Concern about appearance and cleanliness
- Missed days of school
- Lying to cover up hoarding

**Health and safety risks:**

- Chronic headaches
- Respiratory problems
- Allergies
- Insect bites
- Poor nutrition
- Slip and fall
- Barriers to emergency medical professionals

“[L]aws which were written over a century ago to punish and thereby discourage individual bad acts to animals may not work so well when the problem is one of gradually deteriorating capacity of care in which the line between cruelty/not cruelty is harder to discern,” says Patronek. Difficulties arise for law enforcement, humane investigators and protective service workers as these laws may not support an early intervention and proactive approach. And when conditions deteriorate to the point of criminal prosecution, prosecution may not be the best solution. Since hoarders have a recidivism rate of almost 100%, psychological intervention,<sup>9</sup> consistent social work, or probation oversight are the best way to ensure that hoarding does not reoccur or result in other Link-related crimes. Patronek recommends having an increased awareness of the multidisciplinary aspects of animal hoarding cases and bringing together relevant agencies, including forensic mental health professionals, the legal system, veterinarians, animal protection authorities, and public health.

For more information on how children are impacted by hoarding, please visit <http://childrenofhoarders.com/>. For more information on animal hoarding, please visit the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium at <http://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/index.html>

## ANIMAL FIGHTING AND THE LINK

Animal fighting is not simply a big city crime; it is pervading all communities. It is also not solely a crime against animals; it is a crime against society. What was once a cultural past time for some is now a felony in all 50 states. Animal fighting is not only a barbaric and cruel event that results in animals tearing each other apart until a winner is declared (and the loser is often killed or is tossed away to die a slow and painful death), it is connected to a host of other crimes: gambling, physical assaults, sexual assaults, child abuse, domestic violence, drug use, illegal weapons, extortion, arson, racketeering, and so on.<sup>10</sup> As a result, legislators are beginning to include animal fighting in their RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) laws as a recognition of animal fighting linking to other crimes.<sup>11</sup> Laws are also being passed to increase penalties for those who bring children to animal fighting events or commit animal abuse in front of a child.<sup>12</sup>

As animal fighting ventures pervade our communities, children are not immune to witnessing and participating in animal fighting events. Children and youth are being used as bet runners, to raise dogs to fight, and even to throw animals into the ring. This results in:

- Children and youth watching animals being violently killed;
- Children and youth growing up with violence;
- Children and youth being desensitized to harm and violence;
- Children and youth having lower empathy; and
- Children and youth being exposed to dog bites.

To help determine how widespread animal fighting may be for children, Chicago's Anti-Cruelty Society conducted written surveys with 37,702 students in grades K-12 between 2003 and 2006. The surveys were administered at over 1,500 schools, summer camps, and other venues. The chart below shows the findings from the study.

	City of Chicago	Suburbs	Total
No. of students surveyed	35,815	1,887	37,702
Number who have attended dogfights	2,362 (6.6%)	323 (17.1%)	2,685 (7.1%)
Number aware of dog fights in the neighborhood	5,817 (14.4%)	623 (33%)	5,810 (15.4%)
Number who have attended cockfights	359 (1%)	93 (4.9%)	452 (1.2%)
Number of families entering dogfights	163	13	176
Number of serious dog bites	10,647 (29.7%)	636 (33.7%)	11,283 (29.9%)

One highlight from this study is the awareness that animal fighting is occurring in suburbs and is not solely isolated in big cities. In some neighborhoods, the percentage of youths who had attended dogfights ranged as high as 31%. Being aware that children and youth in all communities may be exposed to animal fighting, and having a proper response by investigators and prosecutors, will help in early intervention to ensure that children and youth receive appropriate early-intervention and treatment and are protected from such violence.

## OTHER VIOLENT CRIMES AND THE LINK

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Whenever the Link is discussed, a discussion of serial killers with histories of animal abuse is often included in the conversation. Studies have validated the animal abuse past of dozens of the most nefarious serial killers. However, Link-related crimes happen every day that do not rise to the level of a serial killer. In fact, many serial killers do not have histories of animal abuse in their past. When professionals focus on the extreme cases of serial killers, we may fail to recognize the greater number of “everyday” Link-related crimes happening across the United States and worldwide.

*Those who harm, torture and kill animals for sadistic pleasure or control have few boundaries and should be considered very dangerous.*

Levin and Arluke (2009) studied sadistic serial killers and discovered that a certain type of animal cruelty likely foreshadows this kind of violence. “Torturing animals in an up-close and personal way, especially animals like dogs and cats that have been heavily anthropomorphized in our culture, is a more apt red flag of this form of extreme violence than is everyday animal abuse” (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). Although close to 90% of sadistic serial killers committed all forms of animal abuse (not just hands-on torture), this hands-on animal abuse is similar to the correlation of what was discovered with youth school shooters. So it is important for investigators and prosecutors to focus on the nature of the animal abuse to help determine the propensity for violence in a risk and lethality assessment of the offender.

In a study conducted in 2002 of inmates with the Utah Department of Corrections, 42 men were questioned regarding their most recent and past histories of the treatment of animals and/or for admitting to violence in their interpersonal relationships. The men were ages 21 to 55, over two-thirds of the participants were Caucasian, and more than half were divorced. The survey found that over 55% had actually harmed or killed pets while living with an adult partner, and 50% had harmed or killed pets in general. And when harming an animal was involved, the rate of intimate-partner violence generally increased. For example, 9.5% of men who did not harm/kill animals used force oral or anal sex on a partner, whereas 33.3% of men who harmed/killed animals also used force oral or anal sex on a partner. Rates of other harmful conduct also increased. For example, setting fires increased from 28.6% (of men not harming/killing animals) to 47.6% (of men harming/killing animals); property destruction increased from 28.6% to 42.9%; and punching, kicking or biting others increased from 42.9% to 71.4% (Ascione & Blakelock, 2003).

A study published in 2009 (Alys, et al., 2009) aimed to determine if any association existed between childhood animal cruelty and delinquency, adult offending, violence and a dysfunctional background. Specifically, the study compared sexual homicide prisoners, sex offender outpatients, and a control group of men in an adult education program. Twenty men were in each of the three groups. None of the sex offender

outpatients admitted to animal cruelty, but 19 of the sexual homicide prisoners and 14 of the control group admitted to animal cruelty in childhood. The researchers believed that the sex offender outpatients may have had concerns of admitting to cruelty while still on parole. The results demonstrated that participants with an animal cruelty history were 11 times more likely to be sexual homicide offenders and that those with a greater frequency of animal cruelty in childhood and adolescence were six times more likely to be sexual homicide offenders. This gives some support for the “violence graduation hypothesis” in which offenders become desensitized to violence and seek escalating manifestations to obtain thrills. Other research suggests animal abuse may more likely be part of a “general deviance” theory of criminal behavior. Moreover, the study participants who reported childhood animal cruelty were more likely to be antisocial in adolescence. That antisocial behavior is not limited to violent behavior, but includes general offending, such as property offenses. Of interest was that this study did not support the expectation that sexual abuse would be associated with animal cruelty. Instead, it was associated with physical and psychological abuse. “Participants who were physically abused were three times more likely to abuse animals in childhood and six times more likely to abuse animals in adolescence. Participants who were psychologically abused were two to three times more likely to abuse animals in adolescence.”

### **Fatal Dog Attacks on Humans**

An interesting issue has been on the minds of researchers in recent years: that of fatal dog attacks on humans. Although a hot button issue, we know that dogs are not born vicious (regardless of the breed); improper socialization and/or someone makes them vicious. When investigators encounter a vicious dog in a home, it is important to examine the dynamics that made the dog vicious because studies are now identifying that fatal dog bites are linked to animal abuse.

“Dog bite[s have] been associated with other social problems, including child abuse and other forms of family violence. DeViney et al. (1983) noted that the incidence of injuries from a family pet in homes with a documented history of child maltreatment and animal cruelty was six times the rate of injury seen in families without such history. Jonker & Jonker-Bakker (1991) report that 48 of 62 (77%) children interviewed as victims of sexual abuse had been attacked by their abuser’s dog. Vaisman-Tzachor (2001) expands on this with three additional case histories of this type.” (Lockwood, 2014)

In a study from 2000-2009 (Patronek, et al., 2013), 256 fatal dog attacks were examined from the perspective of situational and environmental factors that may be behaviorally relevant from a dog’s perspective, rather than focusing on the breeds of the dogs involved. The study found that 21.1% of the fatalities involved dogs that were abused or neglected.

The researchers identified a striking co-occurrence of multiple, controllable factors: no able-bodied person being present to intervene (87.1%); the victim having no familiar relationship with the dog(s) (85.2%); the dog(s) owner failing to neuter/spay the dog(s) (84.4%); a victim’s compromised ability, whether based on age or physical condition, to manage their interactions with the dog(s) (77.4%); the owner keeping dog(s) as resident dog(s), rather than as family pet(s) (76.2%); the owner’s prior mismanagement of the dog(s) (37.5%); and the owner’s abuse or neglect of dog(s) (21.1%). Four or more of these factors were present in 80.5% of cases; breed was not one of those factors.<sup>13</sup>